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Athletics

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Aspasia Avgeri ranked No. 1 on the Greek Junior National team and No. 39 in all of Europe before joining the women's tennis team at DePaul.

Photo by Steve Woltmann/DePaul Athletics

Acing It

It's love-love for women's tennis player Aspasia Avgeri

Aspasia Avgeri was only three years old when she fell in love with tennis.

"I remember seeing the Roland-Garros (French Open) on TV and feeling so excited. I said to my mom, 'I want to play that sport,'" recalls the DePaul senior from Athens, Greece.

The very next day, Avgeri's mom took her to their local tennis club to start lessons. By the time she was an adolescent, Avgeri ranked No. 1 on the Greek Junior National team—a spot she held for five consecutive years—and No. 39 in all of Europe.

She first found out about DePaul from a local tennis coach, who told her about the university's program after he saw her beat a competitor who ranked in the top 300 in the world.

"DePaul really appealed to me, because I wanted to keep playing tennis while studying, and in Europe you have to choose one or the other," says Avgeri. "I also really liked DePaul's mission."

But making the decision to move to the United States, a country she had never visited, was not easy.

"I thought about it a lot because even though DePaul is great and I could see the

upside of coming here, I could also see the downside—that I would be far away from home and my family. I'm really close to my family," she says.

But she couldn't refuse a chance to play on DePaul's women's tennis team. In 2016, she boarded a plane to Chicago to begin her studies.

"From the beginning, everything looked bigger. I remember thinking, 'What's happening?' It was for sure a shock. Thank God I had my teammates to show me around and explain how everything works," she says. Many of them knew the challenges because most of them were from other parts of the world, including Russia and Croatia.

English was also a challenge. "In the beginning, it was a struggle because I barely spoke English. But it's a lot better now. I've had some really good professors who really cared, and they helped me through the process," she says.

One distinguishing characteristic Avgeri has is her competitiveness.

"Aspa is never going to give up," says first-year Head Coach Marisa Arce. "She could be down a set and at 5-0, and she will still fight

so hard. You can always count on her on and off the court."

Avgeri is not only an outstanding athlete, but she also maintains a nearly 4.0 grade-point average. As a finance major, she interned in the treasury department of Coeur Mining. "She really does it all and is super inspiring," adds Arce.

Looking back over the past four years, Avgeri is most proud of helping to lead the Blue Demons to their fourth BIG EAST title in the last six years and fifth overall appearance in the NCAA tournament.

As for her future, she sees herself remaining in Chicago and working in finance. In the meantime, she's been soaking in every moment of her last year at DePaul.

"I am really happy that I get to spend my last year with my team and our coaches. I just love them and feel so honored to be part of the team," she says.

Unfortunately for Avgeri, her teammates and college student-athletes nationwide, the NCAA was forced to cancel the remainder of the 2020 spring sports season due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Briefs



BIG EAST champions

■ Women's Basketball, Champions Again

Coach Doug Bruno (LAS '73, MA '88) and his Blue Demons went out on top once again by winning their third straight BIG EAST tournament title with an 88-74 victory over Marquette in March and clinching their 18th consecutive NCAA tournament appearance. The triumph followed a run to the conference regular-season title as DePaul finished 28-5 overall and 15-3 in the BIG EAST. The nationally renowned program has won the regular-season title six of the last seven years and the league tournament five of the last seven years. At the time that the NCAA tournament was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Blue Demons were ranked No. 15 in the nation by the Associated Press (AP) and No. 14 in the USA Today/Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) poll.



Campbell and Stonewall

■ Stonewall, Campbell Garner Postseason Accolades

Women's basketball seniors Chante Stonewall and Kelly Campbell earned a number of awards with their stellar performances on the court and in the class-

room this season. Stonewall was both All-BIG EAST and a CoSIDA Academic All-America selection and honorable mention All-America by the AP, the U.S. Basketball Writers Association and the WBCA. She joined All-BIG EAST guard Kelly Campbell on the Athletics Directors Association Division I-AAA National Scholar-Athlete Team—among only 10 players selected nationwide. Stonewall was named the BIG EAST Scholar-Athlete of the Year and was voted BIG EAST Defensive Player of the Year by the league's coaches. Campbell was honored with the BIG EAST Sportsmanship Award.

■ Spectacular Start for Men's Basketball Team

An 83-78 win over rival Northwestern in front of a vocal Wintrust Arena crowd gave the Blue Demons their best start to a season in 34 years. It was the best opening act since the 1986-87 team began the season winning 16 in a row. Coach Dave Leitao's team also won its final game of a shortened season with a 71-67 triumph over Xavier in the first round of the BIG EAST tournament at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Not long after the final horn, the remainder of the tournament was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic. Paul Reed

was named to the All-BIG EAST Second Team, and Romeo Weems was selected to the BIG EAST All-Freshman Team.



Kyle Mastrangeli and Adam Nelson took first and second in the 60-meter dash.

■ Track and Field Garners Six Individual Titles

In the final event of a shortened NCAA track and field season, Coach Dave Dopek and his program saw six student-athletes take first place at the BIG EAST Indoor Track and Field Championship. Jade Gates won the weight throw and was selected Most Outstanding Co-Performer in Field Events. Also coming home with first-place finishes were Ashton Colaire (60-meter hurdles), Henry Larkin (400 meters), Kyle Mastrangeli (60 meters), Jason Montano (shot put) and Mackenna Orie (shot put).



Reed was named to the All-BIG EAST Second Team.